

Goodbye, Hello

by Syl

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Summary: Dick and Donna explore their long dormant feelings for each other.

Goodbye, Hello

Summary: Dick and Donna break up with their respective significant others and are surprised to find comfort in each other's arms. But can a relationship that's been based on a deep friendship and a brother/sister love last? And what of those they left behind?

(Note: This story takes place shortly after the infamous Nightwing/Huntress New Year's Eve "kiss" and Dick Grayson's Police Academy graduation. And before you send me flaming e-missiles, this is just a "What if?" exercise...Okay?)):

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Goodbye, Hello by Syl Francis

"But, Auntie Donna! I don't \*want\* you to go!"

"I'm sorry, Lian, but it's best that I do."

"Is it because Daddy was with \*her\*?" Lian pointed accusingly at the young woman who was tiptoeing down the hallway. The girl stopped and looked back in obvious panic, knowing exactly what Donna could do to her. The fact that she was currently in an awkward state of hasty undress didn't help her case any.

"Of course not, sweetheart," Donna said, noting wryly that the young woman was trying unsuccessfully to sneak out. She gave her a cold glare, picked up Lian to protect her from the presence of the "intruder," and turned away dismissively. She carried Lian into the nursery. The young woman closed her eyes in sudden relief and left.

Donna held Lian comfortingly, while trying not to telegraph her churning emotions to her goddaughter. The two had returned home early from an afternoon of shopping and playing in the park. They'd wanted to surprise Lian's father. Unfortunately, the surprise had been on them.

Donna took a moment to collect her thoughts. How best to broach the subject without seeming critical of Roy? Lian loved her daddy wholeheartedly, and Donna would not say or do anything to ever hurt the child.

"This has nothing to do with your daddy--" Donna began, but was interrupted.

--Then why *are* you leaving, Wonder Doll? If it has nothing to do with me, that is?" Roy asked. He stood barefoot in the hallway, looking disheveled. He was shirtless, his pants unbuttoned and partially unzipped. He looked unbearably handsome. And impossibly adorable.

Donna wanted to break every bone in his body...

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"You *kissed* her? On New Year's Eve?!!"

"Well, yes, but--"

Barbara's green eyes flashed. "How *could* you--? After all you said? That she meant nothing to you? That that one night stand had all been a mistake--?"

Dick swallowed. How could he explain something that he himself didn't understand? Helena meant nothing to him...and everything. She represented everything he disapproved of, but he couldn't help feeling somehow responsible for her.

It seemed that the more Huntress vied for Batman's approval, the more Batman ostracized her. And the more Nightwing wanted to be there for her. The kiss...it hadn't meant anything. She was injured and laid up in the hospital. She needed someone...*He* needed someone. And it was New Year's Eve.

Dick tried again to explain.

"Babs, it was only *one* kiss. It didn't mean anything. I swear--"

"Like the time you kissed *me*? Not even a week before? I suppose that didn't mean anything, either?"

"You're twisting my words, and you know it," Dick protested quietly.

"Remember that \*you\* threw \*me\* out on New Year's Eve. Remember that \*you\* didn't want \*me\* around that night. Remember that \*you\* said we were going too fast!"

"Sure! Throw my words back at me! It won't be the first time the perp tries to blame the victim!"

"Victim?" Dick laughed in clear disbelief. "Babs, be reasonable. I was wrong; I admit it. But I was lonely. I needed someone and so did Helena. You're the one who said you didn't need or want anybody. You practically threw me out on my ear that night."

Barbara turned her wheelchair and began wheeling towards her newly renovated kitchen. Dick followed her. He looked around at the kitchen's gleaming cabinets and appliances with a touch of pride. He'd done much of the installation work himself. He could still smell the fresh paint.

Dick sighed. Why couldn't he and Babs connect, he wondered for the umpteenth time? Sometimes he felt like he'd loved her all of his life. At other times he felt like he'd always be on the receiving end of her cold shoulder.

"Maybe you're right, Dick. Maybe I \*am\* partially to blame for this. But then again, maybe it's for the best. If all it took was one rejection from me to have you run into the arms of \*that\* woman, then perhaps there was never anything between us..."

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"Don't even try it, Roy," Donna said quietly. She knelt down to Lian's eye level. "Sweetie, I want you understand that I'll always love you. Anytime you need anything...anytime you need to talk...you just call me, and I'll fly right over."

Lian crossed her arms and jutted her chin stubbornly. "Don't you love Daddy anymore?" Her dark eyes looked plaintively at Donna's.

"I'll always love your daddy, Sweetheart. He and I are family, and always will be. Just like I'll always be your Auntie Donna. Forever and ever." She reached out to take the little girl in her arms, but Lian ran to her daddy.

Roy scooped her up immediately.

"\*No\*! You don't love us, anymore. I \*hate\* you!" She hugged Roy's neck tightly.

"Donna, I'm sorry. This is all my fault--" Roy began. Donna turned away imperiously, the very picture of an Amazon princess.

"Roy Harper, do not presume to flatter yourself. This is entirely my own fault. I've known you almost my entire life--"

"You mean, during \*this\* life time, anyway, don't you?" Roy quipped, attempting to lighten the mood.

The woman who was Troia whirled in fury. "Don't you \*dare\* make light of this, Roy. When I moved in here, I came with my eyes fully opened. I knew you, and the kind of man you were. But I was foolish enough to

believe that I could love you despite all that. I was foolish enough to believe that--" Donna stopped. Lian was looking at her, and then at Roy, with wide eyes.

Donna swallowed and looked away. She would not say anything that would lower Roy's stature in the eyes of his daughter. Instead, she changed tack. Firmly placing a wide smile on her face, Donna turned and faced the two people whom she loved more than anyone else in the world.

"I was foolish enough to believe that I could be both a 'wife' and mother, again. But we know how busy life can be when you're a full time Titan \*and\* a fashion photographer. I was crazy...I can't do this. No, Lian needs a full-time mother, and \*you\* need someone who won't throw you out the window at every little thing. So...like I said, it's best I leave..."

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Dick stood with his back to Barbara.

"I guess, it's best I leave," he said. "I was wrong...I admit it. But it doesn't matter. If it weren't this, it would be something else." He closed his eyes, momentarily overcome by the pain. "You'd only find some other excuse to push me away. You told me a long time ago that you didn't need or want anybody. Maybe it's time I listened."

He headed towards the door and paused.

"Don't forget that we're still family, Babs. You know I'll always be there for you. If you ever need anything, just call...and I'll 'fly' right over." He turned the doorknob. He waited for her to say the words that never came. Resignedly, he stepped through the door.

Standing immediately outside her apartment, Dick looked back sadly. "Goodbye, Babs."

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A few weeks later, Dick finally felt like his life was no longer on a downward tailspin. He hadn't been sure that he'd ever recover from walking out on Babs that night, but now--?

Nothing could possibly go wrong now, Dick thought happily. He and Clancy were walking arm-in-arm from the Police Academy parade grounds. He was now a full-fledged, sworn-in officer of the law, and Clancy had just informed him that she'd been accepted into medical school.

He looked into Clancy's lovely, almond eyes and listened to the hidden promise in her lilting Irish brogue. He smiled. Things are looking up, Grayson...

"Congratulations, Officer Grayson."

Dick and Clancy turned towards the new voice. She was standing there under the shade of one of the mighty oaks that lined the drive up to the Police Academy administration building. She wore a brightly

flowered dress that flowed just below her knees. Her beautiful long, sable hair fluttered softly in the gentle breeze.

He recognized her instantly.

"Donna!" Dick cried out in delight. He ran to her and swung her, laughing, in his arms. Her exuberant laughter sounded like musical chimes in a warm spring day. "You \*came\*! This is so \*great\*! Where's Roy? Lian?" Dick looked around for his friend and goddaughter.

"They, uh, couldn't make it, Dick," Donna explained smiling. "But you didn't think for one minute that \*I'd\* miss your graduation?"

Dick looked her up and down, holding her by both her hands. "You look \*wonderful\*!" A sudden warmth suffused him. "Donna, you're the best. I thought that no one in my 'family' even remembered--what with everything's that's been happening and all..." He shrugged lamely.

Donna didn't need to ask. Bruce Wayne hadn't made it. She placed a hand gently on his cheek. "I'm sorry."

"I know. But \*you're\* here now...that's all that matters--"

"Ahem--" A throat being cleared behind them unexpectedly interrupted their reunion.

Dick and Donna turned as one to the 'intruder.'

"Uh, \*Clancy\*! Oh, God! I'm sorry...Donna, I want you to meet a friend of mine...my landlady, actually. Clancy, this is Donna Troy, one of my oldest and dearest friends..."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Ms. Troy," Clancy said, pleasantly. Her light Irish brogue became slightly more pronounced. "Dick, I'm sorry, me boyo, but I must run. I have a few dozen repairs that have been crying out for attention, but that I've been putting off for a while now--"

"Oh, Ms. Clancy...please don't leave on my account," Donna protested.

"Oh, no, Ms. Troy!" Clancy said, laughing a little too loudly, while backing away at the same time. "I \*really\* must go! Mister Grayson, as always--perhaps some other time!" With that, she turned and made her way quickly to the parking lot.

Dick stood uncertainly watching her go. He sighed. So much for that! "Another one bites the dust. Thanks, Donna."

Donna smiled impishly. "Oh, it's not all that bad, Mister Grayson. I'll make it up to you by letting you take me out to an expensive restaurant for dinner."

Dick smiled down at her. "Oh, you will, will you? That's very thoughtful of you, Ms. Troy."

Laughing, the two close friends walked hand-in-hand to the curbside

where they flagged down a taxi...

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"And she walked out? Just like that?"

Donna grimaced. "Well, I thought about tossing her butt out the window, but I didn't think that homicide would be appropriate in front of Lian."

Dick grinned. "I bet Roy feared for his life for a couple of minutes."

Donna did not look amused. She opened her mouth, but Dick beat her to the punch. "Hey--" he said reassuringly, reaching for her hand. "I'm just kidding. What Roy did was wrong, and I'm sure he knows it." Dick shook his head, then added by way of confession, "But he isn't the only male Titan who's just put his big, fat foot in it..."

He proceeded to tell Donna about his own romantic faux pas.

"You \*kissed\* her?" Donna hissed. "The Huntress? What were you \*thinking\*, Richard Grayson? Diana's told me a little bit about her. Enough not to want to meet her in a dark alley--not without my powers, at any rate."

Dick nodded unhappily. "I know...but, I can't help feeling \*some\*thing for her. I mean, she tries so hard. Admittedly, she goes about it the wrong way, and may eventually end up getting herself killed, but--"

"But she wants to do the right thing," Donna said understandingly. "Dick Grayson, you amaze me sometimes. You're probably the smartest guy I know, but in many ways, you're the dumbest. You \*let\* people take advantage of you. You're just so...sweet. That's your problem, did you know that?"

Dick gave her his best Batman/cum/Nightwing scowl, sans the mask. Donna almost choked on her dinner in laughter.

"You're wonderful, Dick," she said, her eyes smiling. "You continue to take in strays who invariably turn around and bite you. This Huntress isn't for you. She's a man-eater from everything I've heard." She paused, and added a little tentatively, "Kory still loves you, Dick. All she needs is a little encouragement--"

Dick emphatically shook his head, 'No!' "That's a closed chapter, Donna. I'm not going back there. In the end, all I had left was pain and emptiness. It took me a long time to climb out of the black hole that I crawled into." He looked at her, his dark blue eyes burning with an intensity she rarely saw. She nodded in acquiescence, but was not about to give up.

"How about Jesse? She's shown a certain interest in Nightwing's...um--" she paused, teasingly, unable to go on.

"I \*know\* what part of Nightwing's anatomy Jesse's shown interest in," Dick interrupted, blushing. "I admit she's cute and intelligent, and we're even a lot alike in many ways...Maybe in another place and time, I'd be interested, too. But--"

"But Barbara Gordon has been on your mind and in your heart for the last few months or so. I \*know\* you've had a thing for her since we were kids, Dick. Are you sure you're not overreacting to what could basically be a crush?"

Dick dropped his eyes, unsure of himself. "Donna, I honestly don't know. I don't know what I want anymore."

He felt Donna's hand slowly encircle his.

"Dick, if it's any comfort," she began. "If I had someone like you, I \*know\* that I wouldn't push you away into the arms of another woman."

He looked up into her beautiful, blue eyes. All he saw was support and understanding. He returned her smile.

"And if I had someone like you, Donna, I'd never be stupid enough to even look at another girl."

They sat gazing warmly into each other's eyes for a minute longer. Dick noticed for the first time how the overhead lights seemed to sparkle in her eyes, like jewels in the bluest ocean. And her lovely smile appeared to be inviting a kiss. Why had he never discerned the glossy sheen of her long, dark hair as it cascaded gently over her shoulders whenever she laughed or shook her head?

Soon, Dick began to feel a slow flush encompass his being. What was the matter with him? This was Donna Troy, his childhood friend, practically his sister. He gave himself a mental headshake.

Can it, Grayson! You're still lonely after losing Babs. Donna doesn't need any more complications in her life...

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As they walked up to her hotel room, Donna felt butterflies in her stomach. What's the matter with you, Donna Troy? Dick Grayson is \*not\* interested in you...not like \*that\* anyway! He's practically your brother. She looked up at him surreptitiously.

Why hadn't she ever noticed just how handsome he was? It seemed that all of the Titan females except for her had at one time thrown themselves at him. Except for Kory, Dick had somehow managed to fend off all of their advances. He was much too intensely focused on being leader, at the job at hand, in his training.

And the one time he'd allowed himself to be distracted by love, he'd been left devastated by the experience. Was it any wonder that Dick rarely gave his heart to a girl? Now, only the second time that Donna knew of (although, admittedly there could've been more, since Dick never seemed to lack for opportunities), Dick had been hurt again.

She sighed.

"What is it, Donna?" Dick asked. He'd stopped at her hotel room door and held out his hand for her key.

She shook her head in self-deprecation. "We sure are a pair, Dick. You'd think that two reasonably intelligent individuals would have better luck in the romance department." She smiled up at him. "I guess we're just hopeless."

Dick unlocked her door and smiled down at her.

"You mean, 'Hopelessly romantic'?" he quipped. "Besides, who ever said that Love was either reasonable \*or\* intelligent?" Turning serious, he continued, "Thank you for coming to my graduation, Donna. It meant a lot to me."

He leaned down to kiss her good night. What started out as an innocent, brotherly peck quickly deepened into something else. Soon, Dick was holding Donna tightly in his arms, kissing her fully and passionately. What's more, Donna was responding with equal fervor.

Eventually, when the two young people broke apart, they breathlessly stared at each other in disbelief. The back of his knees had become watery; hers were about to fold out from under her.

"Donna," Dick gasped. "I-I'm s-sorry...I don't know--"

Donna stood shaking her head. She covered her mouth in surprise. "Dick--? I--"

They continued to stare at each other in mutual shock. Finally, Dick's pounding heart began to quiet down. His stomach stopped its aerial acrobatics. His legs felt able to support him a moment longer. He reached his hand out and tentatively placed it on her cheek.

"Donna, if you want me to leave, just say so. I'll understand."

Donna blinked against the sudden tears, and unable to speak, shook her head. She held his hand against her cheek and smiled through her blurring eyes.

"Oh, Dick...I don't understand, but--"

"I don't understand it, either, Donna," he said, taking her into his arms again.

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Much later, he lay on his side gazing down at her perfect, sleeping form. He was still stunned by the intensity of the feelings raging within him. He'd known her practically all of his life. She'd always been the teammate on whom he could depend the most...the one he entrusted with leadership whenever he had to stand down temporarily.

She was his best friend, his sister, the shoulder he'd cried on when Kory left him, the willing ear he'd confided in when Batman fired Robin, when Bruce adopted Jason, recruited Azrael to replace him. But in all that time, Donna's heart had always belonged to someone else: to Roy, to Terry, to her son, to Kyle, and then to Roy again.



He felt his love suddenly overwhelm him, and he reached for her. Donna woke up and, smiling, came willingly into his arms...

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"Roy called again," Donna said sadly. Roy had been calling her, off and on, for several weeks.

Donna and Dick were in her New York City condominium. The glamorous furnishings were a direct contrast to Dick's own, seedy, Bludhaven apartment. They'd now been dating secretly for a couple of months.

"He says that Lian misses me and our outings together in Central Park." Donna looked ready to break down and cry. Dick held her against him.

"Did you tell him?"

She shook her head. "I couldn't," she whispered. "Did you tell Barbara?"

He shook his head.

"We'll have to tell them," she said unhappily. "Sooner or later, they'll find out. It's best that we're the ones who break it to them."

Dick walked over to the window and looked out. "I know." He felt torn, confused. How could something that felt so right, feel so wrong, he wondered? Sometimes he woke up in the middle of the night glowing with indescribable joy. At other times, he awoke into a deeper darkness than any he'd known while growing up in the Batcave.

He felt a hand on his arm.

"No matter what happens, Dick, I *do* love you."

He turned and took her fiercely into his arms. "I don't want to lose you, Donna. Not now...not when we've just found out how we feel about each other." He held her at arms length. "Donna, will you marry me? Today? Tomorrow? Now?"

Donna looked stunned.

"Marry you--? Dick--?" she shook her head. "Dick, it's too soon. We can't--"

"*Why*? Why is it too soon, Donna? Tell me that. We're neither of us married or engaged to someone else. We're free to marry. You say you love me...I love you, too. What could possibly be wrong with that?"

Donna looked at him, her eyes reflecting the very pain that he felt eating away at him. "Oh, Dick, look at us! Listen to what you're saying!" She suddenly brought her hands up and covered her face. "We've been sneaking around for the past two months, unwilling to tell our closest friends or family about us...About how we *say* we feel about each other. Why?"

She looked at him accusingly as if it were entirely his fault. Dick looked back at her helplessly, unable to answer.

"I'm so ashamed...of me...of us," she whispered. "Of what we're doing...trying to \*steal\* happiness, while hurting those who love us out of spite, because they hurt us."

She began sobbing brokenheartedly. Dick immediately enveloped her in his strong arms. He felt his own eyes watering as he held her to him.

"Shhhh-shhhh..." he crooned softly. "I'm sorry, Donna...I'm so sorry. You're the last person in the world I want to hurt...Please, don't cry...Please..."

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Later, they sat quietly on her sofa, Dick's arms comfortingly around her, her head resting on his shoulder.

"Don't you see, Dick? We found each other on the rebound. We were both hurting and angry at the time. Maybe we needed each other. I know that I needed \*you\*." She looked up him, her lovely eyes still tearful. "I've loved you all of my life, Dick. You're the one person I've always been able to depend on...I've turned to you more often than anyone else I know. I trust you unconditionally. Maybe that's why..."

"Maybe that's why you were able to fall in love with me--for the first time-- all over again," he finished, smiling. She nodded.

"Dick, don't you see? We \*do\* love each other. We always have...We're just not \*in love\* with each other." She tenderly caressed his cheek. "Whenever I'm with you, I feel so loved and protected...so cherished, that it's all I can do not to break into tears of happiness." She dropped her eyes.

"But it isn't enough," Dick said simply. Donna looked up quickly, her eyes reflecting her inner torment.

"Oh, Dick, I'm so sorry. Here, help me...it isn't enough."

A lone tear trailed down her cheek. Dick wiped it tenderly with his thumb, cupping her chin in his hand.

He kissed her playfully on the nose. "Hey, none of that, now," he said hugging her to him. Placing his chin on her head, Dick spoke with a twinge of longing. "I think you're right, Donna. I guess I've loved you all of my life. You were the sister I never had, the friend I could always depend on, the one person whom I could trust above everyone else when things became too much for me."

He grinned.

"We were fated to fall in love, Donna. Did you know that? Some would even say that we're made for each other. But--"

"But neither of us believes in fate, do we?" she asked. Smiling, Dick

shook his head, 'no'.

"And neither of us has been known to listen to what others say," he added. Smiling, Donna pecked him impulsively on the cheek. Dick hugged her closely.

"I love you, Donna Troy," he said. "And given another set of circumstances, I would never let you go. But I can't compete against a certain rakish devil with laughing green eyes and flaming red hair. Nor, do I stand a chance against a curly-haired, dark-eyed angel who loves her Auntie Donna more than anything in the world. With the exception of her daddy, of course."

"And I love you, Dick Grayson," Donna said softly. "But I know that I can't compete against a certain redheaded, ex-babysitter whom you've loved since you were nine."

They shared a quiet moment together.

"So, what next, Ms. Troy? Didn't I hear you say something about a date in Central Park?"

Donna smiled and hugged him. "Thank you, Dick!"

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Pausing at the front door, he heard her in the other room. She was talking on the phone.

"Hello? Roy? It's me..."

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Standing in the shadows afforded by the Gotham Cathedral's snarling gargoyles, Dick finally made the call.

"Oracle, here."

The disembodied, computerized voice sounded cold and businesslike in the breaking dawn. In other words...she sounded wonderful to him.

"It's me."

"..."

Taking a deep breath, he plunged in.

"How about some breakfast? We need to talk."

The End ####

End  
file.